

## Statewide Strategy for Public Health Education, Research, and Service

*This agenda item calls for the establishment of a Statewide Public Health Advisory Committee charged with recommending a Statewide Strategy for Public Health Education, Research, and Service to the Council at its March 2004 meeting and overseeing its implementation.*

*Dr. Rice Leach, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Public Health, and senior public health leadership from the four institutions currently involved in providing graduate education in public health will make a brief presentation at the meeting.*

**Action:** The staff recommends that the Council establish a Statewide Public Health Advisory Committee charged to recommend and, upon Council approval, implement a statewide strategy for public health education, research, and service.

The staff recommends that the Council invite the Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Public Health to serve on the Advisory Committee with the senior public health administrators of the four institutions that offer graduate degrees in public health and the Council's vice president for academic affairs.

Kentucky ranks near the bottom among the states on many indicators of public health. Since September 11, 2001, a new set of public health concerns has arisen around bioterrorism and homeland security. Public health problems in Kentucky will increasingly be a drain on state resources, making it more difficult to address pressing education needs. The Council and the Council staff have focused on the structure of public health programs and program accreditation issues in Kentucky (see November 1, 2001, CPE agenda). The advisory committee brings together providers and consumers of public health education to create a broad public health strategy that addresses education, research, and service needs in Kentucky and places decisions about academic program development and accreditation within that larger agenda.

The Statewide Public Health Advisory Committee will develop a strategy for preparing a professional public health workforce in Kentucky and fostering public health research. The committee will present the plan for Council approval at its March 2004 meeting and oversee its implementation, providing annual progress reports to the Council.

To ensure collaboration among postsecondary institutions and with the professional public health community, the committee should include the Commissioner of Public Health, the senior public health administrators of the four institutions that currently offer graduate degrees in public health (Eastern Kentucky University, University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and Western Kentucky University), and the Council's vice president for academic affairs. The committee will involve other postsecondary institutions and agencies as appropriate to advance the agenda. For example, several universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System are currently involved in training and research activity related to bioterrorism and homeland security issues.

At minimum, the strategy shall include the following:

- ?? Recommending strategies for school and program accreditation that best serve Kentucky's public health education, research, and service needs including assessment of the costs of implementing these strategies.
- ?? Developing online courses in each of the five core disciplines in public health as part of a cooperative master's in public health professional degree offered by ECU, UofL, UK, and WKU that is designed to increase the number of public health professionals in Kentucky and raise the education levels of the current workforce.
- ?? Facilitating development of postsecondary policies to create seamless access and articulation into and among graduate public health academic programs in Kentucky (e.g., policies governing credit transfer and tuition).
- ?? Enhancing professional development programs for public health practitioners through work with the Department of Public Health, the Kentucky Public Health Association, and the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute to improve the quality of the public health workforce.
- ?? Expanding multi-institutional/multi-agency efforts to prepare public health and related personnel to address bioterrorism and other homeland security issues.

?? Developing proposals to increase the level of extramural research funding in public health and related homeland security areas.

Since 1999 the state's four universities (UK, UofL, ECU, and WKU) offering graduate education in public health have supported an ad hoc joint committee to collaborate on education, research, and service programs. The senior administrators leading the effort include the director of UK's School of Public Health, the associate dean of UofL's School of Public Health and Information Sciences, the dean of ECU's College of Health Sciences, and the dean of WKU's College of Health and Human Services.

The ad hoc committee's work has focused on development of a series of five Web-based courses that represent the core requirements of all of their professional master's degree programs in public health. The Council provided a modest grant to help with that effort. Two grants have been submitted for the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education that will further assist in accomplishing the task. This effort involved convening the faculty members who will teach those courses and the institutions' distance learning coordinators and health librarians. The intent is to share faculty expertise and institutional resources in teaching the Web-based courses, making those courses and the MPH degree more accessible to students across the institutions and to professionals in the field. Two courses currently are available on the Web for use by the institutions. The remaining courses will be online in the 2003-04 academic year.

This action will formalize and expand the work of the original ad hoc committee, better connecting institutional work with the needs of the professional community and increasing funding for public health research through collaborative proposals. The statewide strategy will build on current collaborative work.

In November 2001 the Council, responding to accreditation requirements by the Council on Education for Public Health, authorized UK and UofL to develop cooperative degree programs needed to meet CEPH accreditation standards for schools of public health. The Council set a December 2004 deadline for making a final decision on the structure of graduate public health education at the two schools. Following Council action, UofL submitted a proposal for a cooperative Master's in Public Health degree with ECU, UK, and WKU necessary for accreditation of a school of public health. UK developed the collaboration with UofL required by the Council when it provisionally approved the doctorate in public health (DrPH) and that degree has been granted active status. WKU has a CEPH accredited MPH and ECU is in the process of seeking accreditation for its MPH program. With this action the Council charges the Statewide Public Health Advisory Committee to review the

accreditation issues and costs for public health schools and programs in Kentucky and recommend a strategy that efficiently and effectively serves public health needs.

The four institutions also are collaborating to improve the existing public health workforce through professional development programs. For the last four years, the Kentucky Department of Public Health, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has supported the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute, which provides leadership education for senior state and local health officials. All institutions actively participate in this institute, providing mentors and faculty. The Commissioner of the Department of Public Health has described this institute as a major contributor to improving the state's public health capacity. The advisory committee will develop strategies to increase funding opportunities for this and other professional development programs in Kentucky.

Recently bioterrorism has become a major public health concern. In response, the four institutions offering graduate education in public health were asked to do a needs assessment of Kentucky's public health workforce for bioterrorism. That work allowed the institutions to combine public health and public safety resources to meet Kentucky's needs. The needs assessment has positioned the four lead institutions to work with the Department of Public Health, other universities, the KCTCS, and the Division of Emergency Management to ensure that personnel receive the education that is needed to assure competence in the bioterrorism area. The advisory committee will develop strategies to continue and expand funding for this important work.

In 2002 UofL and UK reported approximately \$15 million in new public health grants. By promoting collaborative efforts among the four institutions, the advisory committee will help increase research funding well beyond the current level. For example, a partnership between UK and UofL resulted in a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health grant to investigate the health of the workers at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant. This project demonstrates the ability of the universities to collaborate to increase research activity.

In March 2004 the advisory committee will recommend a statewide strategy for public health to address Kentucky's public health needs. Upon Council approval the committee will oversee implementation of the plan and provide annual reports to the Council on its implementation.